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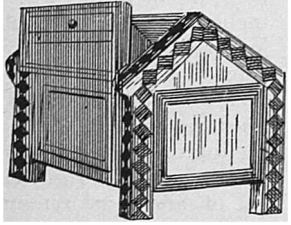
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## STUDIES IN FURNITURE DESIGN.

## FIRST PARALLEL.—EGYPTIAN—ASSYRIAN.

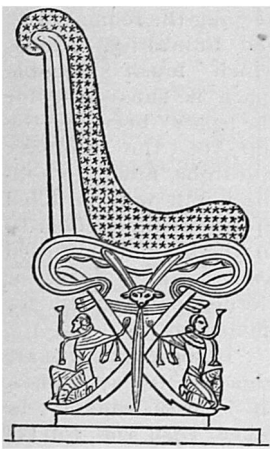
THE illustration upon the opposite page shows two styles of furniture architecture—the Egyptian and the Assyrian—displayed in a double design for a fire-place, mantel and over-mantel.

The representations of furniture shown upon the sculptured walls of Egypt constitute the principle evidence we have of its original appearance. Naturally, the wood itself has been destroyed, or has crumbled away, and with the exception of half a dozen specimens in the British Museum, and one or two at Berlin, it is doubtful whether any articles remain from the early ages of Egyptian history. It is rather remarkable, considering the unmistakable purpose of the artisans of that time and country to have been the construction of objects that would survive for all time, that no more satisfactory measures were adopted to perpetuate their furniture.



INLAID EGYPTIAN CHEST.

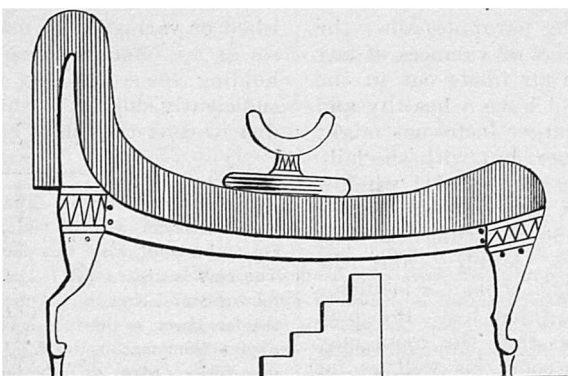
Carpenters and cabinet makers were numerous, and it is thought they were efficient and masterly, although they had but limited resources to do with, so far as the products of the country were concerned. Egyptian wood consisted of date, palm, sycamore, tamarisk and acacia, of which the latter was the most suitable, and, in fact, the only one grown in the country really adapted to furniture. Deal and cedar they received from Syria and ebony from Ethiopia. The pyramidal character of architecture prevailed so far as possible, or so far as consistent, in the style of their furniture, and one is not surprised to see square corners and sharp angles where the other arts partook of the same peculiarity, though the elaboration and magnificence of the details appear to be almost too profuse to conform with the rather crude outlines which we have become accustomed to associate with Egyptian forms. Chairs were upholstered on the seat and back with rich and costly textiles, the upholstery frequently extending over the top of the back and covering it entirely; the frame was frequently of artistic shapes, representing animals and even human figures. Mr. Pollen, in his *South Kensington Hand-book on Ancient Furniture*, refers to an Egyptian chair in the possession of the Museum which, he says, "is made of ebony and inlaid with collars and dies of ivory. The legs are joined by light rails of cane, the back straight, two cross-bars and light rails between. The slightly hollowed seat is of plaited cane, as in modern chairs." Chairs of this description were often made sufficiently large to accommodate two persons, and frequently occupied by the master and mistress of the house. These double chairs were seated with leather, which was either painted in representations of flowers or other rich designs, or stamped. Camp stools, or chairs answering to this modern article, were much used.



EGYPTIAN UPHOLSTERED CHAIR.

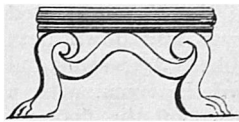
Tables were round, square or oblong, and the means of support were divided between elaborately carved legs, solid ends like boxes, or a highly ornamental manner of cutting away the under part of the table, giving the legs the appearance of miniature temple-shaped blocks. At meals the round table was generally used, and the guests, instead of reclining upon the couches, as was the custom later with the Greeks, sat in the chairs during the meal, and gave much attention to the etiquette of the meal.

In the bedroom the bedstead was gracefully curved, and had one end



EGYPTIAN BEDSTEAD AND IVORY HEAD-REST.

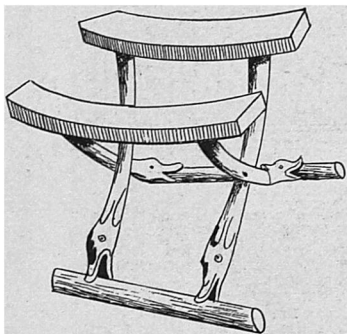
elevated for the head or rest, which latter was often made to take the place of a pillow. They had, in addition to the bedstead, chests and coffers and stands of shelves and couches in the shape of ottomans.



EGYPTIAN FOOTSTOOL.

textiles adorned with needlework of differently colored wools, silks and gold thread, and the couches, particularly, giving opportunity for display by the size and prominence amongst the other furniture, had thrown over them during the day a valuable covering, which was removed when it was desired to convert the couch into a bed for the night.

In the illustration shown upon the opposite page, the side representing the Egyptian form may be finished in its details so as to conform accurately with the fashion of the Egyptians themselves, or the shape may be preserved and the minor matters made in accordance with the means or tastes of to-day. The designer's intention was that the backing above the mantle should be of silk, blue being the preferable color, with the small stars in gilt. Below this silk is set a mirror, as shown in the drawing. The columns upon either side are of wood, with small shelves supporting bronze ornaments or appropriate Egyptian figures. The headpiece of the entire structure is coved, and below it is a railed piece extending between the columns upon either side. These columns, it will be noted by the plan at the lower end of the drawing, stand one slightly in advance of the other. The sun-like device on the upper edge of the silken panel was a popular figure for this character of work, and if reproduced in gilt or silver would have a pleasing effect.



EGYPTIAN CAMP STOOL.

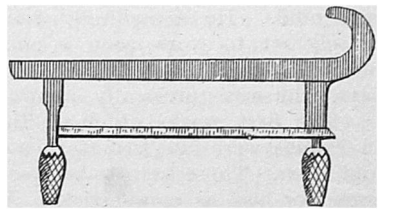
The mantel-shelf itself should be of wood, as is also the partitioned space directly beneath it, containing jars, vases and such objects suggestive of the epoch portrayed.

The wide ornamented panels upon either side of the grate opening are intended to be of wood, with a metal border or band about them studded with stars or rosettes. In the grate opening there should be tiles employed, and these tiles of colors as brilliant and rich as the surroundings will admit; blue, yellow or red are colors that would be in accordance with the other rich fittings of the mantel, and agreeing with the manner of early decoration. It is probably unnecessary to remind the reader that the shapes and forms of the smaller ornaments are all made according to existing examples of early art.

The indications of Assyrian furniture remaining to us are much more plenty and satisfactory than those of the Egyptians, and since the excavations and discoveries by Mr. Layard were published, the world has been, in a great measure, familiarized with the character and appearance of Babylonish or Ninevian household appurtenances.

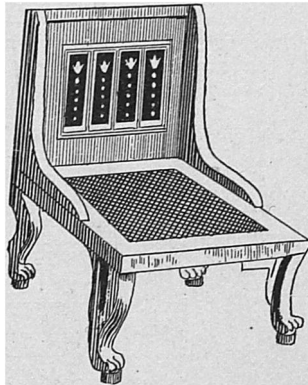
The skill of the Assyrians in cabinet work and inlaying is shown to have been marked even at the early eras of their history, for they were familiar with embossing of gold and silver; veneering does not seem to have been used to such an extent as in other countries, and the furniture, altogether, was more solid and substantial than that of Egypt. Much of the angularity of this latter style was discarded by the Assyrians, and the corners and joints were somewhat less harsh and severe, although all their domestic articles were constructed upon a positive architectural basis, with the advantage that every part was made in conformity

with its purpose, and the supports of chairs or tables were indicative of a suitable sustaining strength. The representation of the leg of a lion or tiger or horse served as legs to furniture, imitations of trunks of trees were also made, and with the exception perhaps of the pine cone, a favorite form for ending the lower part of the leg, there was little to criticise on the plea of lack of application or uniformity.



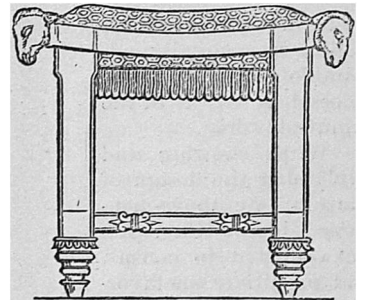
ASSYRIAN BEDSTEAD OR COT.

Chairs, naturally admitting of considerable ornamentation, were in every country made much of, and having a prominent position in relation to guests and in public rooms, displayed the skill of the wood-carver to an almost unlimited extent. Entire figures of horses frequently served as arms, and in other instances human figures stood as posts to sustain the back or sides. Knobs projected in the form of rams' heads, and bronze or gold hoofs terminating the legs, were not exceptional. The ornamental carving upon the rails and frame generally, was very profuse, although there was a system followed in retaining plain spaces between them. Some panels being curved, projected

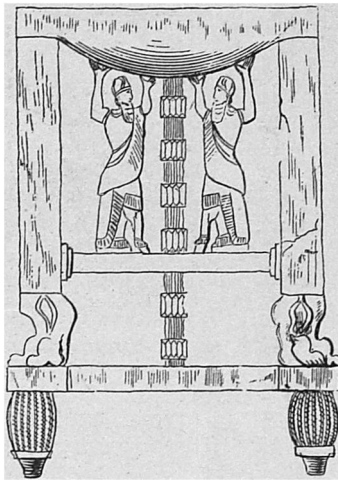


EGYPTIAN CANE SEAT CHAIR.

from the frame itself. When the chairs were high, as they generally were, a footstool of wood encased in metal was placed before each. As thrones are but a form of chair, they might properly be considered in the same connection, and the throne described by Layard as being found in the palace of Nimroud is worthy of repetition: "With the exception of the legs, which appear to have been partly of ivory, it was of wood, overlaid with a bronze. The metal was most elaborately engraved and embossed with symbolical figures and ornaments like those embroidered on the robes of the early Nimroud Kings, such as winged deities struggling with griffins, mythic animals, men before the sacred tree, and the winged lion and bull. As the woodwork over which the bronze was fastened by means of small nails of the same material had rotted away, the throne fell to pieces, but the metal casing was partly preserved. The legs were adorned with lions paws resting on a pine-shaped ornament, like the throne of the later Assyrian sculptures, and stood on a bronze base. A rod with loose rings, to which was once hung embroidered drapery, or some such stuff, appears to have belonged to the back of the chair, or to a framework raised above or behind it. In front of the throne was a footstool, also of wood, overlaid with embossed metal, and adorned with the heads of rams or bulls."



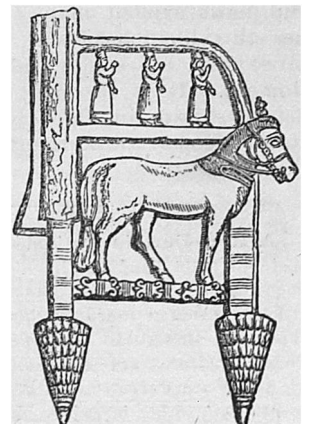
ASSYRIAN STOOL.



ASSYRIAN TABLE.

Herodotus (i. 14) says, speaking of the offering at Delphi: "Midas, son of Gordius, King of Phrygia, dedicated the royal throne, on which he used to sit and administer justice, a piece of workmanship deserving admiration." And in referring to the Temple of Belus, Herodotus (i. 183) adds: "In it is a large golden statue of Jupiter, seated, and near it is placed a large table of gold; the throne, also, and the step are of gold, which together weigh eight hundred talents, as the Chaldeans affirm." The Attic talent was sixty pounds of our weight.

The description of the throne of Solomon in i. Kings x. 18 and 19



ASSYRIAN ARM CHAIR.



might be accepted as a very good illustration of Assyrian work: "Moreover the King made a great throne of ivory, and overlaid it with the best gold. The throne had six steps, and the top of the throne was round behind, and there were stays on either side on the place of the seat, and two lions stood behind the stays."

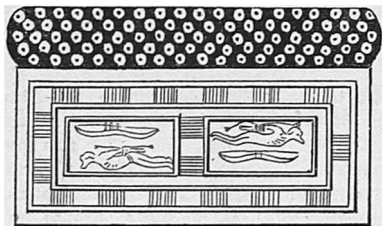
The tables, as may be gathered by the few references in the preceding passages, were of considerable elaboration as well, and about the same character of ornament prevailed as upon the chairs; the legs were generally four in number, placed as with our modern table, at or near corners, and they were carved in resemblance to fruits or vines, with a claw or hoof at the floor.

Tables were sometimes made very much as are our camp stools, with the legs crossed, and, it may be, capable of being folded beneath.

Bedsteads were without foot-boards, but the head-piece curved up over the sleeper; they were perfectly flat in design, and not very much elevated from the floor. The side pieces and other portions were richly carved.

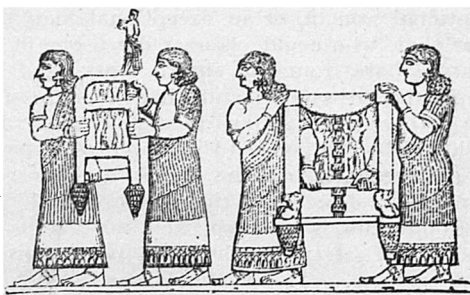
The value set upon furniture, and its position among the finer products of the industrial arts, may be understood from the fact that it was thought to be worthy of being presented to the king or ruler, and we see in the wall sculptures and paintings that foreign ambassadors included pieces of household furniture among the gifts brought by them as friendly offerings to the court.

In the Assyrian side of the drawing, or "Parallel," the mantel-shelf and all below it may be in marble, the carving upon it, and that on the column supporting it, should be of the true Assyrian character, which the artist has indicated very faithfully. Immediately back and above the marble shelf is a mirror, projecting over which there may be seen a second, and higher still, a third small shelf. These shelves are of wood, and carved along the outer edges. The short column at the end sustaining these shelves is of wood, and ends in the customary lion's paw resting upon an inverted cone. The large columns at the extreme sides are wood, and they terminate in the top, which is also of wood, having a valance or lambrequin of handsome material ornamented with a silken fringe, and having, like the Egyptians, an emblem or device suitable to the country to which it belongs. The panel in the centre is of silk, as are those narrower ones at the side, these latter separated by a wood band enriched with metal rosettes. A curtain of some handsome stuff, having a bullion fringe along its lower end, may be suspended from a brass bar beneath the valance, and the curtain may remain generally but half pulled across the front, or better still, gathered and looped up at one side.



ASSYRIAN OTTOMAN.

It is the purpose of this paper to give each month a piece of modern furniture, decorated according to the style of certain antique or classical designs. This it is believed will find favor with many who may be familiar with the principles of each style, but have no source of information touching their actual application to the requirements of to-day.



BEARING PRESENTS OF FURNITURE TO AN ASSYRIAN KING.

This want of ready reference is not confined to buyers, but is in a great measure felt by manufacturers and designers, who may at some time have a call for a particular style, perhaps Egyptian or Assyrian, possibly the Spanish Renaissance, the Jacobean, or the Louis Quatorze, and for the moment feel at a loss where to find the proper example of that particular epoch. The possession of these examples, particularly if they be suited to the wants of the cabinet makers of our own time, will be of considerable value. By combining two designs in one article of furniture, the difference between the styles is more readily impressed upon the mind, and therefore more likely to be valuable.

Our illustration next month will show the Grecian and Greco-Roman, to be followed by sundry other styles treated in a manner similar to that here under consideration. The small illustrations accompanying the articles are taken from the best and most reliable sources we are able to command.

## A TASTEFUL ROOM.

ONE of the prettiest rooms in Brooklyn is octagonal in shape and not very large in size; has a dining-room beyond it and two entrances opposite each other, each being curtained and each revealing through it a tasteful and inviting apartment. At one side of these doors is a bay window and at the other a mantel and fire-place. The walls are decorated with a frieze, eighteen inches deep, of tapestry, showing plants and herbage; the centre space or body of the wall has gold colored or shaded tapestry, and below it a dado of green stamped velvet. The floor is carpeted.

The fireplace is treated with a decided originality, having a framing projecting from either side, at the angles or corners of which stands a column supporting a canopy of wood.

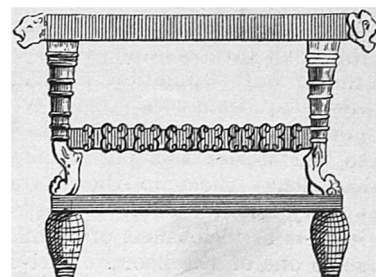
The window seat in the bay is upholstered in satin and plush. In the centre of the room is a marquetry table; the remaining sides of the room are filled with cabinets and easy chairs. Blue and white china, oriental ware, lamps and feather fans are among the bric-a-brac.

Considering the general effect produced by the form of the room, the gold colored walls with ornaments in low relief, giving a play of light and shade; mahogany furniture inlaid with marquetry in harmonious colors and in Renaissance design; the hangings to doors, windows and projecting fireplace, of two shades of brown tapestry; the velvet and plush covering of chairs and window seat, and Persian carpet on the floor, giving rich pieces of color, finished by the pictures and decorative objects about the room—the whole has a charming decorative effect.

Panels in Terra Cotta with a light, graceful bordering of ivy leaves painted on them, are very handsome.

A Very Neat Drawing-room has the walls in terra-cotta, dado chocolate-brown, and curtains peacock-blue satin, lined with brown plush. The furniture peacock-blue in color and the cabinets, tables, etc., ebony and brass.

A fleur-de-lis may be cut out of piqué and guipure, edged round with card, then the whole metalized with silver. An adhesive backing may be added, so that a decorator simply orders so may fleur-de-lis, heats the backing, applies them to his plush, or velvet, or hanging, puts a stitch in at the points, and the work is finished. This system is generally used for the decoration of lambrequins, etc.



ASSYRIAN BENCH.